

***A Bibliography of Canadian Folklore in English.* Compiled by Edith Fowke and Carole Henderson Carpenter (Toronto, Buffalo, London : University of Toronto Press, 1981. 272 pages. Includes index. ISBN 0-8020-2394-0.)**

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

Volume 5, numéro 1-2, 1983

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1081223ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081223ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (imprimé)

1708-0401 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (1983). Compte rendu de [*A Bibliography of Canadian Folklore in English*. Compiled by Edith Fowke and Carole Henderson Carpenter (Toronto, Buffalo, London : University of Toronto Press, 1981. 272 pages. Includes index. ISBN 0-8020-2394-0.)]. *Ethnologies*, 5(1-2), 107–108. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081223ar>

A Bibliography of Canadian Folklore in English

Compiled by Edith Fowke and Carole Henderson Carpenter

(Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1981. 272 pages.

Includes index. ISBN 0-8020-2394-0.)

This comprehensive bibliography includes 3877 entries dating from the seventeenth century until 1979. Though only materials published in English are included, the sheer volume and scope of the material are evidence that the study of folklore in Canada has come of age. It is difficult to imagine how so ambitious a work could have been assembled without the happy collaboration of Edith Fowke, doyenne of Canadian folklore study, and Carole Henderson Carpenter, the first to write a serious history of the field.

The entries are arranged by genre — folktales, folk music and dance, folk speech and naming, superstitions and popular beliefs, folklife and customs, folk art and material culture. Within each generic category, the material is further subdivided by culture — Anglophone and Celtic, Francophone, Indian and Inuit, and “other cultural groups”. In addition, there are sections on reference materials, periodicals, general works, biographies and appreciations, records, films, theses and dissertations. The volume is indexed by author and editor. Entries are coded to distinguish “authentic” from “popularized” material and to indicate the relative importance of the entry. An erudite introduction sketches the history of Canadian folklore study and clarifies the principles that guided the compilers in assembling and arranging the entries.

The strengths of the volume are its sensible delimitation to works in English — it is hoped that subsequent volumes will appear covering materials in other languages; the broad definition of Canadian folklore; the thorough scouring of the literature; the professional preparation of the entries; and the clear

organization by genre and cultural groupings.

The major weakness is accessibility. It is revealing of the state of Canadian folklore study that a generic arrangement should still be considered the most useful. In a sense, any arrangement is arbitrary and will do, as long as the material is indexed to allow users maximum flexibility and efficiency in searching for what they need, although some arrangements are better for browsing. Though the author/editor index is essential, it is not enough. Should the volume be updated and reissued, I would recommend the addition of indices by place in Canada (particularly given the local and regional emphasis in Canadian folklore study), as well as by nationality, religion, ethnic identification, or language, as appropriate. This type of index is especially important for those sections of the book that are arranged only alphabetically — for example, general works, theses and dissertations, films, records, biographies and appreciations, which could also use a genre index. A subject index for the whole volume would be helpful, because it could specify much finer distinctions than the general categories used for arranging the material and would eliminate the need for cross-referencing at the end of sections. A model for such an index may be found in Alan Dundes, *Folklore Theses and Dissertations in the United States* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1976), a work not cited in the reference materials section even though it contains Canadian material and was no doubt consulted. For a revised edition, I would also urge that essays in collective volumes be itemized. Some of the most important recent studies on diverse subjects are to be found in such volumes. There is no reason to treat this material differently from articles in journals.

Three smaller points. First, the usefulness of the elaborate coding system may be questioned. In many cases the nature of the material may be surmised from the publication information, and

for the serious scholar, everything must be examined in any case. Much more important would be to indicate if musical transcriptions and illustrations are to be found in a given work. Though not intended, the coding of entries in this bibliography will make an interesting chapter in Canadian folkloristics, because of the careful differentiations among "authentic," "literary," "rewritten," and "reprinted" texts, among "most important," "less important," "good," and "valid" items, and between works designed for a popular audience or suitable for young people.

Second, ambiguous cases such as the Métis and Blacks might be better listed under "other cultural groups", rather than as Francophone and Anglophone, respectively — the political implications of such classifications are unfortunate, as the compilers acknowledge.

Third, if at all possible, it would be helpful to have more complete information on films and records, especially the filmmaker on record maker and the subject, where this is not clear from the title. I assume that in those cases where this information is lacking, it was simply not available. A list of videotapes would be a welcome addition.

A *Bibliography of Canadian Folklore in English* is an invaluable addition to the field. This comprehensive and expertly prepared volume is an indispensable tool for the study of Canadian folklore.

Barbara KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT
Tisch School of the Arts
New York University

Dictionary of Newfoundland English

Edited by C.M. Story, W.J. Kirwin and J.D.A. Widdowson
(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

In 1956 when G.M. Story reported, after two years, to the St. John's branch of the Humanities Association of Canada¹ on some of the problems involved in putting out a "Newfoundland Dialect Dictionary," he still had 26 years ahead of him before the work was finally to appear. To these years of dedicated effort by Story we must add the major contributions of the co-editors W.J. Kirwin and J.D.A. Widdowson, all the work done by the many collectors and contributors listed over a number of pages in the Introduction, and no doubt many other contributors to collecting, editing, publishing, etc., who could not be listed. By all this effort, the initial list of 2,000 words available in the mid 1950's has grown to the 625 pages of the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, which represent, by the way, less than 50% of the items collected for the dictionary.

Most dictionaries, by their very nature, are built up at least in part on the basis of centuries of earlier lexicography. As a result, when a new dictionary appears that aims to be a complete dictionary of a language such as English, much of what has gone into the making of the dictionary is not new. Even so, reviewers who have any sense of what underlies a dictionary approach a review of such a work with considerable diffidence and humility: the chances are slim indeed of making more than vaguely appropriate comments about a work which may represent (as in the case of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, for example) twenty years of work by a huge team of researchers building on the accumulation of over two hundred years of lexicographical scholarship.

In the case of a regional dictionary, the challenges to a reviewer are all the more daunting: the likelihood is that the only people in the world knowledgeable enough to review such a dictionary as the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* or the *Dictionary of Canadianisms on*

1. *A Newfoundland Dialect Dictionary: A Survey of the Problems*. St. John's, Newfoundland: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1956.